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| INFO | LOG-00 | NP-00 | AID-00 | AMAD-00 | CIAE-00 | INL-00 | DODE-00 |
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 FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6815
 AMEMBASSY PANAMA
 AMEMBASSY CARACAS
 AMEMBASSY QUITO
 AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
 AMEMBASSY LIMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BOGOTA 007721

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/1/10
 TAGS: PHUM, PREF, PGOV, CO
 SUBJECT: COLOMBIA'S INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AT RISK

REF: A) 1999 COUNTRY HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT B) 99 BOGOTA
 9715 C) BOGOTA 2826 D) BOGOTA 4217 E) BOGOTA 5895 F)
 BOGOTA 6200

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CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR ANNE W. PATTERSON. REASONS:
 1.5 (B&D).

1. (C) SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF
 COLOMBIA'S INDIGENOUS (ONIC), EIGHTY-FOUR INDIGENOUS
 COMMUNITIES WITH THEIR OWN DISTINCT CULTURE AND LANGUAGE
 LIVE IN COLOMBIA. A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF THESE
 COMMUNITIES ARE LOCATED IN RESOURCE-RICH AND STRATEGIC
 AREAS, MAKING THEIR COMMUNITIES TARGETS FOR ALL ARMED
 ACTORS. IN ADDITION TO A GENERAL LACK OF ACCESS TO
 EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES, COLOMBIA'S INDIGENOUS
 COMMUNITIES ALSO FACE THREATS, MURDER, FORCED

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON
 DATE/CASE ID: 19 MAY 2004 200303455

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CONSCRIPTION, AND DISPLACEMENT. ONIC STATES THAT THERE IS A LACK OF INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND POLITICAL WILL TO ADDRESS THEIR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC NEEDS AND GUARANTEE THEIR SECURITY. GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES, SUCH AS THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR, RESPOND THAT THE ISOLATED AND DANGEROUS SITES OF MANY INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AND THEIR AUTONOMOUS WAY OF LIFE MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO ADDRESS THESE ISSUES EFFECTIVELY. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) ACCORDING TO [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] MOST INDIGENOUS GROUPS ARE CONCENTRATED IN THE ANDES MOUNTAINS, PACIFIC COAST LOWLANDS, THE GUAJIRA PENINSULA, AND AMAZONAS DEPARTMENT. COMPRISING MORE THAN 800,000 PEOPLE, THE INDIGENOUS REPRESENT ROUGHLY TWO PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY'S TOTAL POPULATION. ACCORDING TO
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[REDACTED] 93 PERCENT OF THIS NUMBER LIVE IN RURAL AREAS, 25 PERCENT OF THESE LIVE ON RESERVATIONS (RESGUARDOS), AND APPROXIMATELY 115,000 INDIGENOUS ARE CURRENTLY WITHOUT LAND. ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL AGRARIAN REFORM INSTITUTE (INCORA), 68,245 INDIGENOUS FAMILIES LIVE ON DESIGNATED INDIAN RESERVES, AND SINCE DECEMBER 1999, 488 REQUESTS BY INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES TO ESTABLISH NEW RESERVES REMAIN OUTSTANDING. [REDACTED] NOTED THAT ROUGHLY 95 PERCENT OF THE COUNTRY'S RESOURCES, INCLUDING RIVERS, PETROLEUM, AND GOLD AND URANIUM DEPOSITS, ARE FOUND ON INDIGENOUS RESGUARDOS AND CLAIMED TERRITORIES. BECAUSE OF THE PRESENCE OF THESE IMPORTANT RESOURCES, ARMED GROUPS, THE GOVERNMENT AND MULTI-NATIONAL COMPANIES CONTEST INDIGENOUS LAND OWNERSHIP. (NOTE: THE MOST WELL KNOWN DISPUTE IS THE FIGHT BETWEEN THE U'WA INDIGENOUS GROUP AND OCCIDENTAL PETROLEUM OVER DRILLING. THE EMBASSY HAS REPORTED EXTENSIVELY ON THIS DISPUTE. SEE REFS B THROUGH F. END NOTE.)

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INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES: STRATEGIC CONFLICT ZONES

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3. (C) ACCORDING TO [REDACTED]

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES HAVE STRESSED THEIR NEUTRALITY IN THE CONFLICT AND HAVE REQUESTED THAT ALL ARMED ACTORS RESPECT THEIR AUTONOMY. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO [REDACTED]

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INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES ARE PRESSURED BY ALL ARMED GROUPS
TO PROVIDE SHELTER AND FOOD, OR GUIDING AND LANGUAGE
SERVICES. THIS HAS LED ARMED ACTORS TO PERCEIVE THAT THE
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INDIGENOUS SUPPORT THEIR ENEMIES, MAKING THEM TARGETS OF
VIOLENCE. ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] AND PRESS REPORTS, THE
COLOMBIAN MILITARY HAVE ALSO ENTERED INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITIES WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM THE INDIGENOUS
LEADERS, "MILITARIZING" THEIR COMMUNITIES TO PREVENT THEM
FROM BEING "INFILTRATED" BY INSURGENT GROUPS. ACCORDING
TO THE CENTER FOR INVESTIGATIONS AND POPULAR RESEARCH
(CINEP), FROM JANUARY TO MARCH 2000, THERE WERE 4 CASES
OF EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS OF INDIGENOUS MEMBERS, 7 CASES
OF TORTURE, 5 DISAPPEARED, 1 ARBITRARY DETENTION AND 2
CASES OF KIDNAPPING. TWO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES WERE
THREATENED. (NOTE: THE PERPETRATORS WERE NOT IDENTIFIED
IN CINEP'S FIGURES. END NOTE.)

4. (C) [REDACTED] STATED THAT MANY INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES
HAVE BECOME "KIDNAPPED" AS A RESULT OF THE ARMED
CONFLICT. AS AN EXAMPLE, [REDACTED] DESCRIBED HOW THE
ENTRANCE AND EXIT OF AN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY IN THE
MAGDALENA RIVER REGION HAVE BEEN CONTROLLED BY THE
PARAMILITARIES, AND INDIVIDUALS WHO WISH TO LEAVE THE
COMMUNITY MUST EXPLAIN WHERE THEY ARE GOING. NO MORE
THAN FIVE PEOPLE CAN LEAVE THE COMMUNITY AT A TIME FOR
FEAR OF BEING PERCEIVED AS GUERRILLA INFORMANTS BY THE
PARAMILITARIES. ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] AND PRESS REPORTS,
PARAMILITARY GROUPS IN MANY DEPARTMENTS HAVE RESTRICTED
FOOD AND RESOURCES FROM ENTERING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES,

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
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AMEMBASSY CARACAS
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AMEMBASSY LIMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 BOGOTA 007721

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/1/10
TAGS: PHUM, PREF, PGOV, CO
SUBJECT: COLOMBIA'S INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AT RISK

VIRTUALLY STARVING COMMUNITIES INTO SUBMISSION OR VIRTUAL
EXTINCTION.

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5. (C) [] NOTED THAT THE ARMED CONFLICT HAS STRAINED
THE TRADITIONAL ORGANIZATION OF THE INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITIES. ACCORDING TO [] REGIONAL INSTABILITIES
HAVE MADE IT EASIER FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES TO RESORT
TO GUERRILLA OR PARAMILITARY AUTHORITY, RATHER THAN THEIR
OWN TRADITIONAL RESOLUTION MECHANISMS. [] STATED THAT
WHEN PROBLEMS ARISE BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS WITHIN A
COMMUNITY, THEY MAY "DENOUNCE" THEIR ADVERSARIES AS
GUERRILLAS OR PARAMILITARIES. []

REJECTED THIS, STATING THAT THIS PROBLEM IS NOT ENDEMIC
TO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, BUT RATHER RESTRICTED TO A FEW
INDIVIDUALS TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE ARMED CONFLICT.

FORCED RECRUITMENT

6. (C) [] CITED FORCED RECRUITMENT AS THE BIGGEST
PROBLEM OF THE INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT AFFECTING
COLOMBIA'S INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES. ACCORDING TO []
THE INDIGENOUS' KNOWLEDGE AND FAMILIARITY OF LOCAL
TERRAIN AND DIALECTS MAKES THEM USEFUL TARGETS FOR FORCED
RECRUITMENT AS GUIDES OR SOLDIERS BY ARMED GROUPS.

[] NOTED THAT THE MILITARY HAS ALSO ENGAGED IN
FORCED RECRUITMENT. [] STATED THAT THERE ARE NO
STATISTICS OR NUMBERS TO DETERMINE HOW MANY INDIGENOUS
HAVE BEEN FORCIBLY RECRUITED (INCLUDING THE NUMBER OF
MINORS FORCIBLY TAKEN).

DISPLACEMENT

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7. (U) [] STRESSED THAT MANY ORGANIZATIONS AND GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES DO NOT UNDERSTAND HOW DISPLACEMENT AFFECTS INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES. HE DESCRIBED HOW MOST INDIGENOUS FLEE TOGETHER IN COLLECTIVE DISPLACEMENTS, RELOCATING TO ANOTHER INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY, THEREBY PUTTING EXTREME PRESSURES ON ALREADY LIMITED RESOURCES. IN OTHER CASES, INDIGENOUS DISPLACED WILL GO TO THE CAPITAL OF THEIR RESPECTIVE DEPARTMENTS OR MOVE DIRECTLY TO BOGOTA IN HOPE OF BETTER PROTECTION AND ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVES. [] NOTED THAT THERE IS AN EXTREME LACK OF INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND POLITICAL WILL TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF DISPLACED INDIGENOUS, AND AFTER 90 DAYS, AID IS OFTEN TERMINATED REGARDLESS OF WHETHER OR NOT THEIR COMMUNITIES ARE CONSIDERED SAFE (NOTE: THIS IS THE CASE FOR ALL INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN COLOMBIA. END NOTE.)

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8. (U) [] EMPHASIZED THAT COLLECTIVE RETURNS WERE ALSO MORE DIFFICULT FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, CITING THAT DEPENDING ON THE LENGTH OF THEIR DISPLACEMENT, THE OPPORTUNITY TO PLANT OR SOW CROPS MAY HAVE PASSED AND CULTURAL TRADITIONS MAY HAVE BEEN WEAKENED OR, AFTER A LENGTH OF TIME, LOST. OFTEN, THOSE ALREADY IN THE CITIES CHOOSE TO REMAIN, BELIEVING THAT THE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES ARE GREATER IN THE URBAN AREAS. [] DESCRIBED HOW SOME INDIGENOUS CHILDREN DISPLACED IN MEDELLIN FOR 8 YEARS HAD BECOME "CHILDREN OF THE CITY" AND NO LONGER HAD ANY INTEREST IN BEING AN ACTIVE PART OF THEIR COMMUNITY.

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INDIGENOUS LEADERS THREATENED
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9. (C) ACCORDING TO [] A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF INDIGENOUS LEADERS HAVE BEEN KILLED, FORCIBLY DISAPPEARED OR EXILED, AND AS A RESULT, FEW CURRENT LEADERS HAVE BEEN WILLING TO RISK SHOWING LEADERSHIP OUTSIDE OF THEIR COMMUNITIES. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, IN THE LAST TWO YEARS, MORE THAN 150 INDIGENOUS LEADERS HAVE BEEN KILLED. []

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STATED THAT THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES HAVE DEMANDED A GOVERNMENTAL PROTECTION PROGRAM FOR THEIR LEADERS SIMILAR TO THE PROTECTION PROGRAM CURRENTLY AVAILABLE TO NGO AND UNION LEADERS. [REDACTED] STATED THAT THESE PROGRAMS ARE DESIGNED FOR URBAN NOT RURAL AREAS, AND THE ISOLATED AND DANGEROUS LOCATION OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES MAKE A PROTECTION PROGRAM FOR THE INDIGENOUS UNLIKELY.

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LIMITED INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

10. (C) [REDACTED] STRESSED THAT INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES LACK INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FROM KEY GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES NECESSARY TO ATTEND TO THEIR NUMEROUS CONCERNS. HE NOTED THAT ALTHOUGH THE COLOMBIAN CONSTITUTION ADDRESSES THE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 BOGOTA 007721

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/1/10
TAGS: PHUM, PREF, PGOV, CO
SUBJECT: COLOMBIA'S INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AT RISK

RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, THESE RIGHTS ARE NOT FULLY OBSERVED. [REDACTED] STRESSED THAT THE RIGHTS AND NEEDS OF THE INDIGENOUS ARE NOT CONSIDERED PRIORITIES

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WHEN HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT AND AN INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT ARE
MORE PRESSING ISSUES. HE HIGHLIGHTED THIS POINT BY
STATING THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET INCLUDED THEM IN
THE PEACE PROCESS, EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE MOST AFFECTED BY
THE ARMED CONFLICT. [REDACTED] STRESSED THAT THE ALLOCATION OF
ONLY TWO SENATE SEATS FOR INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATIVES HAS
NOT BEEN ADEQUATE TO EFFECTIVELY ADVOCATE FOR INDIGENOUS
ISSUES IN CONGRESS. BOTH [REDACTED] STATED THAT
THE INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INDIGENOUS
COMMUNITIES AND THE GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES CHARGED WITH
WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITIES IS POOR.

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11. (C) [REDACTED] STATED THAT THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR'S
OFFICE OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS, WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE FOR
PROTECTING THE TERRITORIAL, CULTURAL, AND SELF-
DETERMINATION RIGHTS OF INDIANS, HAS A CHAOTIC
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, OFTEN
FORMING STRATEGIC ALLIANCES WHEN IT IS CONVENIENT TO DO
SO. HE NOTED THAT THEY ACT AS BUREAUCRATS, RATHER THAN
AS ADVOCATES FOR INDIGENOUS RIGHTS. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] STATED THAT THEY HAD A GOOD
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES. SHE
DEFENDED [REDACTED] NOTING THAT THEY WORK CLOSELY WITH
THE PROSECUTOR GENERAL, THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, THE
MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS OMBUDSMAN
(DEFENSOR) TO COORDINATE INTER-INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR
ALL INDIGENOUS ISSUES THROUGH A COMMISSION CREATED IN
1996. HOWEVER, [REDACTED] ASSERTED THAT HER OFFICE DID NOT
REALISTICALLY HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO INVESTIGATE MANY
INDIGENOUS COMPLAINTS OR CONCERNS. SHE STATED THAT

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INVESTIGATIONS WERE GENERALLY DIFFICULT DUE TO THE
ISOLATED AND DANGEROUS LOCATIONS OF THESE COMMUNITIES AND
THE NUMBER OF WITNESSES UNWILLING TO COOPERATE.

12. (U) ACCORDING TO [REDACTED] THE HUMAN RIGHTS
OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE OF INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS WHICH IS CHARGED
WITH PROTECTING AND PROMOTING INDIGENOUS HUMAN RIGHTS,
RECEIVING ANY COMPLAINTS (INCLUDING TERRITORIAL
COMPLAINTS), INVESTIGATING HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES, AND
HELPING WITH COMPLAINTS AND JUDICIAL PROCESSES, MAINTAINS
AN EXCELLENT RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES.
SHE NOTED THAT HER OFFICE RECEIVED MORE THAN 850

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COMPLAINTS IN 1999. ALTHOUGH MANY INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES ARE DIFFICULT TO REACH, THROUGH THE SUPPORT OF VARIOUS NGOS, HER OFFICE CAN EFFECTIVELY INITIATE INVESTIGATIONS ON THESE COMPLAINTS AND CONDUCT RESEARCH ON ISSUES AFFECTING THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES.

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14. (U) COMMENT: AS ARMED ACTORS VIE FOR CONTROL OVER STRATEGIC AREAS, COLOMBIA'S INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES ARE UNDER THREAT. INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES AS A WHOLE LACK THE COHESION AND POLITICAL CLOUT TO WIN SUSTAINED GOVERNMENT ATTENTION. SOME SPECIFIC GROUPS LIKE THE U'WA AND EMBERA-KATIO HAVE SUCCESSFULLY ALLIED WITH INTERNATIONAL NGOS TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL RECOGNITION. MOST HOWEVER, ISOLATED GEOGRAPHICALLY AND POLITICALLY FROM COLOMBIA'S CENTERS OF POWER, STRUGGLE TO MAINTAIN CULTURAL IDENTITY AND COMMUNAL INTEGRITY. THE LACK OF GOVERNMENTAL POLITICAL WILL AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT TO ADDRESS THE INDIGENOUS' CONCERNS FOR SECURITY, ACCESS TO SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SERVICES AND INCLUSION IN THE PEACE PROCESS, MAKES IT DIFFICULT FOR THE INDIGENOUS TO REMAIN COMPLETELY NEUTRAL IN THE COUNTRY'S ARMED CONFLICT.

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